

# Eloise Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Johnny and Freda Brooks Resource Center  
710 Snively Avenue  
Eloise, FL 33880

**Monday June 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Attendance:**

Advisory Committee Members present:

- Lee Castillo, Eloise CRA Committee Chairperson
- Eugenia Barton, Eloise CRA Committee Member
- Minerva Gil, Eloise CRA Committee Member
- Martha Paul, Eloise CRA Committee Member

Polk County BoCC Staff present:

- Delia Jouppi, CRA Manager
- Tonya Long, Code Investigator, Code Enforcement
- Amy T, Code Investigator, Code Enforcement
- Deputy Jordan Owens, Polk County Sheriff's Office

Other Polk County Staff Members present:

- Diane Rosebrough, Polk County School Board

**CALL TO ORDER** –Committee Chair, Lee Castillo called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m., welcoming all attendees.

### **No. 1 on Agenda: Welcome to Stakeholders**

Lee Castillo welcomed stakeholders and had the CRA Committee Members introduced themselves.

### **No. 2 on Agenda: Approval of March 6, 2023, Minutes**

The March 6<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes were not brought up for approval.

### **No. 3 on Agenda: Old Business:**

Mike Callendar was unable to attend the meeting. Delia Jouppi reported his update as follows:

- Snively Brooks Park
  - Construction of the sand volleyball court started this morning (6/5/23).
  - The Parks & Recreation Team is coordinating with the concrete contractor to start the repair of the walking trail. This will begin immediately upon receipt of the sand for the volleyball court.
  - Sodding of the soccer field has been completed, however it was placed before the rainy weather so it died. Delia to check with Mike if Bahia Grass was laid, and what the likelihood is that it will bounce back. It was noted that someone appeared to have been hired for two weeks solely to set up portable sprinklers and move them every couple of hours. This did not help the grass at all. It was then noted that the Committee does not wish to pay for these services. Delia commented that CRA Committee will not be billed for that “watering service”.
  - An order is being placed for the following items for the soccer field:
    - Goals

- Benches
- Corner Flags
- Additionally, the following is being ordered for the volleyball court:
  - Nets

There is no lead time on the delivery of these items.

- Tracy is getting quotes for the new digital sign. At the next meeting, there will be three quotes available for the Committee to review and bid on.
- Mike needs direction on the following items:
  - Committee direction on shade trees for the playground vs. a tarp so the tarp does get torn up during severe weather. Does the Committee still want shade trees? If so, Mike will begin working with an arborist on the best trees to use.
    - The Committee members commented that they want to make sure the trees are placed in a way where the roots won't damage the walkways as the current tree roots have damaged walkways in the past. Delia to verify with Mike on proposed tree placement. However, this a question that Mike has regarding these new shade trees since their is fencing around the park, as well as a retention pond, so space is a concern.
    - Diane Rosebrough noted an issue with these trees:
      - Severe weather is a concern with trees aging and their branches breaking down causing them to fall or become uprooted.
      - She suggested to consider having the tarps professionally taken down in advance of severe weather to preserve them. However, the Parks Team is currently experiencing a staff shortage so this may not be an option. Mike noted in a previous meeting that if the tarp option were chosen, he would ensure that he'd have staff out to remove the tarps before any severe storm hit. Delia made an important point that during hurricane events, many BoCC staff members are required to work at either a shelter or a call center checking if residents need transportation to a shelter.
      - Delia to check with Mike as to if removable tarps are available.
      - Lee Castillo expressed an interest in looking another option besides tarps or shade trees. Delia to bring this to Mike for investigation.
      - Lee also expressed concern regarding potential liability issues if a tree branch falls and hits someone causing injury. Delia to bring this concern to Mike as well.
  - Also discussed was a retractable shade for the back patio area of the Resource Center.
    - Is there any interest in pursuing it? No one has directed him to investigate options available.
      - The Committee members thought this was a good idea and have given the go-ahead for Mike to investigate a retractable shade or some sort of metal roof to be installed above this area.
- Martha Paul commented that she noted the current sign was lit up indicating there is power going to the sign. Deputy Owens confirmed there is power there.
  - Delia commented that Mike Callendar was unaware the existing sign lit up. Mike will need to be advised of this for quote purposes. The fact that there is power to the existing sign will change the quotes significantly.

- There was no new business to be discussed.

#### **No. 5 on Agenda: Open Discussion**

- Boris Rodriguez, Resource Center Manager, discussed the following updates:
  - The first day of summer camp started today (6/5/23). It will run through August 4<sup>th</sup>. There is a total of 52 people registered
  - Salsa classes are starting every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month starting June 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:30pm – 7:00pm. The instructor will be Louis Campañera. He will be providing the music and instruction for the first hour of the class with a social time/dance practice for the last half hour.
  - Zumba is also available on Thursday nights from 6:15pm – 7:15pm. Both classes are instructor led. These classes are free to the community.
  - The Hispanic Heritage Festival is scheduled for **September 16<sup>th</sup> from 11:00am – 3:00pm**. It will be held at Lake Gwyn Park, which allows for the festival to be more expansive. A number of area communities will be involved this year.
- Deputy Jared Owens reported on criminal activities over the last three months:
  - There was only incident to report:
    - A gentleman broke somebody's garage window attempting to drive that person's car. The perpetrator was promptly arrested & put in jail for his actions.
    - Beyond that, Eloise has been a crime-free community.
    - Eugenia Barton noted that there have been some issues in the Snively Brook Park parking lot which have been reported. The issues involved people parking their vehicles in the lot in the early hours of the morning (around 2am – 3am) They were playing loud music and generally causing a disturbance in the neighborhood. She also noted that the police have been contract on three separate occasions.
      - Deputy Owens asked what the outcome was and/or who to the police calls? Eugenia indicated that she did not receive any information as to the outcome of those calls.
      - Deputy Owens also commented that without knowing which deputy responded to the calls, it's very difficult to track. He suggested that the next time there is a need to call in this disturbance, ask the responding deputy to reach out directly to the caller so they know the outcome.
      - Lee Castillo asked if it would be possible to have signs posted stating "No one is allowed in the parking lot after (X time)" or "Vehicles will be towed if found after (X time)"?
        - Deputy Owens commented that a request like that should be directed to the County. Delia noted she will bring this to the Parks & Recreation Manager for discussion.
        - Delia also noted that some of the County parks do have signage that read "Parks close at dusk. No vehicles allowed between dusk to dawn".
    - Diane Rosebrough noted that the issue with the drivers of the 4-wheelers have been solved. It turned out that a former employee had a key to be able to unlock the gate. To fix this problem the lock on the gate has been changed.
    - The issue with cars speeding through the speed zone in front of the school was discussed. A question was raised if a police officer could be placed there to continually monitor the area?

- Deputy Owens indicated that an officer can be placed there on a full-time basis if the school pays for it (similarly to the way All Saints Academy does). Or if incidents are called in, an officer will get there as quickly as they are able
- Delia added that both the Sheriff's Dept, as well as the County are both experiencing staffing shortages, which is unfortunate. She took the opportunity to ask the group to refer anyone they know who would be interested in employment with either the Sheriff's Dept or the County. She also noted that there is a \$7,000 sign-on bonus to new hires with the Sheriff's Dept.
- Lee suggested the idea of placing a police car near the speed zone to act as a deterrent. Deputy Owens noted he will look into that.
- Delia asked if there were any questions that can be directed to Code Enforcement:
  - A question was raised regarding the new houses being built in the area. Have these homes been purchased and expected to be occupied soon? Or will they remain vacant for an extended period, which opens the opportunity for them to be vandalized?
    - Tonya Long, Code Investigator, indicated she did not know the exact status of these homes, but speculated that if priced right they could sell fast, if not sold already.
    - There are 10-15 homes on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets that are owned by the same company and planned to be built over the next six months.
    - It was also noted that many of the streets between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets are in really bad shape and in need of attention.
      - Tonya addressed the issue indicating she knows exactly where these streets are. Quite a few clean up requests have been sent to Code Enforcement. The team will be dispatched to perform abatements on the properties. This will take time, though, as there are currently between 70-100 abatements that need to be done. Code Enforcement currently has only three vendors available to perform these clean-ups, so they are dispatched 10 at a time to each vendor.
      - It was also noted that some of the property owners will move their debris from lot to lot as a quick fix when they are cited to clean up their property. When this happens frequently, Code Enforcement will send out their Environmental Deputies to criminally cite these owners in an effort to stop what they are doing.
    - Additionally, it was noted that homeless people have gone under the bridge again. Several homeless encampments were found.
      - Tonya advised that Code Enforcement has been working with property owners, who have scheduled vendors to perform a clean up of that area. However, it was noted that some legal issues have arisen with regard to getting the people off the property. The clean up vendor will go in once the homeless people have left the area. The plan is to remove all the tall vegetation on the property so they can get a full picture of the area. The agency agreements allowing trespassing citations to be issued will be signed at the time as well. The goal is to have this fully area cleaned up within the next three months.
      - It was noted that these homeless encampments aren't just appearing under the bridge, tents have also been seen in some of the nearby vacant warehouses.
      - Tonya commented that the Homeless Coalition has also been out to these areas attempting to help these people, however many of them refuse assistance.

- The restroom in the park was also brought up for discussion. A question was raised if there were any reports of them being messed up or vandalized in any way.
  - Tonya indicated that Code Enforcement hadn't received any reports or complaints since the last one but will investigate it to verify.
  - She reminded the group that call the Sheriff's Dept with anything that looks suspicious.

**Reminder About Upcoming Advisory Committee Meetings:**

Meeting location: Johnny & Freda Brooks Resource Center

- Tuesday, September 5, 2023, at 6:00pm
- Monday, December 4, 2023, at 6:00pm

**ADJOURN**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30p.m.

Minutes transcribed by:

*Lisa Urban, CAP-OM*

Secretary II

Budget & Management Services Division

Polk County Board of County Commissioners